

BEYOND THE SCANDAL:
SEEKING MORALITY IN
SENSATION FICTION

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University-San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

Bethany Maxwell, B.A.

San Marcos, Texas
May 2011

BEYOND THE SCANDAL:
SEEKING MORALITY IN
SENSATION FICTION

Committee Members Approved:

Kathryn Ledbetter, Chair

Priscilla Leder,

Teya Rosenberg

Approved:

J. Michael Willoughby
Dean of the Graduate College

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgment. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of this work I, Bethany Maxwell, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

DEDICATION

To Winston
who was by my side for each page
and always reminded me to take the time to play.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support my family has provided throughout this process. I could not have completed this work without their encouragement and belief in my success. I especially appreciate the time and dedication of my committee members, Dr. Priscilla Leder and Dr. Teya Rosenberg and my thesis chair, Dr. Kitty Ledbetter, who was continually dedicated to my thesis and my growth as a writer.

This manuscript was submitted on April 8, 2011.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter	
I. “Crimes cause their own detection”: Social Class and Consequences in <i>The Woman in White</i>	8
II. The “Secret” is in Morality: <i>Lady Audley’s Secret</i> and Women’s Power Struggles	27
III. Morality and Moderation: Self-Control in <i>East Lynne</i>	46
Conclusion	65
WORKS CITED	67

Introduction

The stimulating and scandalous plots of the aptly named sensation novels drew in not only fervent readers, but also brought an abundance of critical outrage. The genre proved to be just as much of a scandal among British Victorian critics as the shocking incidents included in the immensely popular novels. To the critics, a novel, which developed as a middle-class genre, was expected to reflect traditional morals, yet the sensation novel, reigning in the 1860s and 1870s, appears to defy this convention. Reviewers were outraged at the continuous startling events in the novels and feared that the seemingly immoral plots would affect the readers' own values. Admittedly, nineteenth-century critics had some basis for their arguments. In three of the most popular and lasting sensation novels, *The Woman in White* (1859-60) by William Wilkie Collins, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861-62) by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and *East Lynne* (1860-61) by Ellen Wood, immoral acts include murder, attempted murder, bigamy, child abandonment, adultery, theft, usurpation of rank, and just plain bad manners. Thus, the sensation novel was named and known for its characters' astonishing actions, and critics based their accusations of immorality on these scandalous acts. The unsigned 1863 *The Living Age* article "Our Female Sensation Novelists" condemns the sensation novel because it "stimulates a vulgar curiosity, weakens the established rules of right and wrong, touches, to say the least, upon things illicit, raises false and vain expectations, and draws a wholly false picture of life" (369). This quotation, just one among many

admonishments on the genre, epitomizes the disgust with which literary critics viewed the novels. Ellen Miller Casey studies the criticism of the genre and discusses the critics' attacks on sensation novel immorality in her 2006 essay, "'Highly Flavoured Dishes' and 'Highly Seasoned Garbage:' Sensation in the *Athenaeum*:"

Again and again the reviewers lashed out at the novels' immorality, describing them as 'effete and deathly,' 'impure,' 'morbid,' 'poisonous . . . and degrading,' and 'neither . . . natural nor . . . wholesome.' In short, sensation novels undermined morality because they were 'pervaded by a vague, relaxing element, in which no brave or strong principle of virtue can exist.' (8)

Casey analyzes what many have claimed for years: the sensation genre is immoral.

However, this genre should not be labeled as lacking Victorian values simply because it contains depictions of immoral behavior. The aforementioned novels, leaders in the genre, display a range of traditional Victorian principles which surpass the immoral actions and lead to overwhelmingly moral stories. Various actions and developments in the works, specifically social migration, disprove nineteenth-century critics' accusations of immorality. A pattern of increased social status as a reward for good behavior is common in sensation novels, clearly suggesting that notions about the genre as immoral are misguided. The following chapters will demonstrate the ways upward social migration rewards good behavior, while the downward spiral of those in social power as punishment for immoral behavior indicates that the sensation novel actually supports a very traditional framework of Victorian morality, rather than disrupting morality.

Each novel includes excessive social movement and praises the rise of the moral middle class over the falling once-privileged aristocracy. This repeated theme of middle-class ascension indicates the prominence of the issue in Victorian England. Concern over social migration and transforming identities was preeminent among the worries of the day as societal position was not just a label to the Victorian, but it provided a sense of self. In the novels, a character is never introduced without his or her place in society carefully noted; characters themselves are perpetually aware of their station and the restrictions or privileges it entails. The importance of class position was especially revered at this time as the social system of British society was quickly changing. The long cherished noble ranks were now challenged by an upwardly mobile middle class. The middle class was becoming more educated, refined, and genteel; as this social division improved they sought to rise to the next echelon of society. Propelled by business profits, manufacturers, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals danced in the ballrooms of the once exclusive ranked nobility. However, this upwardly mobile middle class was not restricted to urban business and manufacturing success stories. Brought into the country by The Great Exhibition of 1851, scores of foreigners invaded the social strata also; foreigners were generally distrusted as their prior place in society was unknown. All of these individuals served to change the ranks of the upper class and blur once carefully preserved social lines.

The varied social movement displayed in the popular novels indicates that readers and, thus society, yearned for more social mobility. This indicates that the reading public did not fear the class system itself or desired a class-less Britain. Yet, the novels demonstrate a method to the social movements. Not all aristocratic characters fall. Not all

middle class individuals rise to wealth. Only the worthy move up the social ladder; those who have not earned their rank fall lower in society. For example, in *The Woman in White*, the aristocracy is represented by the pure and innocent heiress Laura Fairlie, her indulgent and useless uncle Frederick Fairlie, the deceptive and ill-legitimately ranked Sir Percival, and the Count and Countess Fosco who assist Sir Percival in his deceit. These characters present a less than stellar view of the higher-social circles. Though Laura Fairlie, turned Lady Glyde, is a charming and honest woman, she is presented as a helpless victim; others use her rank and money, and Laura presents little strength of her own. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, the reader again finds an impostor within the aristocracy with Lady Audley herself and discovers a legitimate member of the aristocracy, Sir Michael Audley, is a victim of the impostor. In *East Lynne*, Lord Mount Severn disgraces himself by mismanaging his affairs and his daughter, Lady Isabel, abandons her husband and children for another man. Additionally, the aristocracy is disgraced when Sir Francis Levison is discovered to be a murderer. However, it is not just the upper class that experiences disruption. The middle class of these novels often experiences a social climb. Walter Hartright, in *The Woman in White*, perseveres in his mission and is elevated from drawing master to husband. In *East Lynne* both Barbara Hare and Archibald Carlyle move out of the middle class and into upper class society during the course of the novel. Indeed, the social migration in these sensation novels demonstrates the importance placed on the social hierarchy and its value to the populace. The novels suggest that social rank is necessary, important, and most of all, something to be earned. Those who do not earn their rank through hard work or good deeds do not deserve to remain in the aristocracy. However, those who respect the system and demonstrate moral integrity are openly

welcomed up the social ladder. Therefore, these novels imply the Victorians' fear was not of social migration, but that the hierarchal system lacked justice.

Though each novel deals with social migration and favors the middle class, the emphasis on morality differs. *The Woman in White*, often considered to have sparked the sensation genre, allows only a middle-class male character to rise from his original social position. Moral females in the novel temporarily fall from their place and must have assistance from a man to regain their original status. In contrast, females are significantly more powerful in *Lady Audley's Secret*, which focuses on the social movements of female characters. The women in the novel use various methods to gain social position and dominance over their male counterparts. Yet, similar to Collins's novel, only the moral women are successful in their endeavors. *East Lynne* again allows moral individuals exclusively to rise in status and includes an abundance of aristocratic falls, but emphasizes the importance of moderation as a form of morality. Therefore, the novels are similar in that they all encourage the rise of the middle class and its values, yet they differ in the methods and focuses used to achieve this aim. The common thread links the novels and indicates that these topics, social migration and morality, were often foremost on the minds of Victorians. The relevancy of the topics allowed Victorian readers to relate to the stories and become personally involved with the tale.

In addition to the contemporary topics, the structure and distribution of these three sensation novels intensified the readers' potent and personal reactions to events. Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund state in *The Victorian Serial* that: "[t]he interruptions inherent in serials naturally encouraged writers to work in the primary mode of the Victorian age, realism" (11). Indeed, in order to make their plots even more shocking, the authors

attempted to write as realistically as possible. Contemporary English philosopher Henry Longueville Mansel wrote what is now recognized as one of the most scathing condemnations of sensation fiction: “[t]he sensation novel, be it mere trash or something worse is usually a tale of our own times” (qtd. in King and Plunkett 57). Mansel’s comment from his 1863 *Quarterly Review* essay “Sensation Novels,” though not a valid description of the quality of the genre, correctly highlights that the novels were typically set in their own time and attempted to incorporate several references to current society. These novels were published alongside actual news of the day; editors often arranged periodicals to place nonfiction news articles alongside a related fictional piece. The novels’ realistic style and placement adjacent to nonfiction led to a sense of believability. All three pieces are set in England and mention specific areas of the country. Contemporary events and conveniences are alluded to throughout the novels in order to enhance the realism. Collins mentions the Great Exhibition; Braddon’s Robert Audley makes great use of trains and telegraphs during his investigations; Wood scatters political elections, divorce laws, and fashion trends throughout *East Lynne*. Realistic elements reminded contemporary readers of their own lives. By placing extraordinary events in everyday British life, the sensation novelists increased their chances of drawing the reader into the fictions. Mansel acknowledges and attacks the genre’s realism by stating:

Proximity is, indeed, one great element of sensation. It is necessary to be near a mine to be blown up by its explosion; and a tale which aims at electrifying the nerves of the reader is never thoroughly effective unless the scene be laid in our own days and among the people we are in the habit of meeting. (qtd. in King and Plunkett 57)

Perhaps critics berated the genre because of this “proximity;” the sensational shocks were often set in Victorian parlors and may have been too close for comfort. Reviewers worried that the close ties between the readers and the novels, the relevant topics and the modern references, would cause the readers to embody some of the immoral elements and destroy the carefully preserved Victorian values.

The immense irony of the situation is that the critics and sensation novels were actually espousing the same Victorian moral values. Yes, the novels contain immoral characters and disturbing events, yet these individuals are punished and the righteous middle-class is allowed to gain power as a direct result of their values. The critics failed to see past the adulterous and murderous plots to discover both the moral structure in the genre and the strength and dexterity of these novelists in their ability to weave the corrupt and the virtuous together in these thrilling tales. Though there are assuredly some sensation novels that may not highlight morality as strongly or may include more atrocious actions than the ones discussed in these novels, *The Woman in White*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *East Lynne* were at the established head of the genre and can thus be treated as representative of the genre. These novels assuredly illustrate that even some of the most sensational of the sensation novels may endorse traditional Victorian morality.

Chapter I

“Crimes cause their own detection”:

Social Class and Consequences in *The Woman in White*

The elaborate and suspenseful plot of *The Woman in White* (1859-1860) by William Wilkie Collins focuses on one element: social class. The lack, the loss, the search, the theft, and the ascension of status pervade the novel and lead many of the characters to commit scandalous and immoral acts. Or at least, immoral by Victorian middle-class standards. Originally serialized in the periodical *All the Year Round* and edited by Charles Dickens, the novel highlights the sturdy link between morality and the middle class. The traditional understanding of “Victorian morality” relates specifically to the middle-class. Gertrude Himmelfarb states: “‘Victorian values’ are seen not as generically Victorian but as specifically middle-class values” (214). Sally Mitchell expands on exactly what middle-class values included: “[i]n addition to maintaining a certain kind of house, the middle class despised aristocratic idleness; the majority valued hard work, sexual morality, and individual responsibility” (21). Furthermore, self help, or the belief that “people could change their lives,” and respectability were critical to the Victorian idea of morality (Mitchell 259-62). These values are advocated throughout the novel as the middle class triumphs over the aristocracy by means of persevering morality.

Despite the moral middle class portrayed in the novel, the atrocious methods enacted by some characters earned *The Woman in White* a reputation as immoral and

meant for lower classes. Extraordinary actions include poisoning, forgery, shifting identities, placement in insane asylums, blackmailing, arson, identity theft, and various modes of deception. These acts, taking place in the middle and upper classes of society rather than the lower classes, shocked audiences and led to accusations that the work was vile and cheap. For example, a February 1861 *Dublin University Magazine* commentator indicates *The Woman in White* is a lower-class story by calling it “grotesque” and likening the plot to what one might find “portrayed on the boards of a penny theatre” (105). Additionally, an 1863 *Westminster Review* article contains an odd analogy that compares Collins and peer sensation novelist Mary Elizabeth Braddon to showmen exhibiting a “big black baboon whose habits were so filthy, and whose behavior was so disgusting, that respectable people constantly remonstrated with him for exhibiting such an animal” (157). This reference insinuates that Collins was merely peddling filth to his readers.

Though the novel did include despicable actions, the contemporary reviewers’ arguments that *The Woman in White* is immoral and low class are significantly flawed. The justice code imposed on criminals, the rewards for morality, and the ascension of the middle class all indicate that the novel actually espouses a very strict Victorian middle-class moral ideology. For this discussion, morality will include acts that serve to benefit others, traditional domestic propriety, respect for earned social status, and honesty; this also includes the idea that immoral deeds cannot be hidden and will be punished. Based on this definition, the contemporary critics correctly labeled the previously mentioned evil deeds as immoral. However, the reviewers did not read past these unprincipled acts to find the just consequences imposed on evildoers. As morality and social station are

intricately linked in Victorian society, the novel systematically uses class position as a means of justice. For example, though Sir Percival Glyde mocks his wife Lady Glyde, the former Laura Fairlie, for her “copy book morality,” her view that moral justice will prevail is proved true throughout the novel as social position is used as a reward and punishment system for wrongdoers (Collins 228). The criminals are punished for their immoral actions and decline in social station. In contrast, through hard work and moral stability Walter Hartright, a middle-class character, is able to rise to prominent position. *The Woman in White* does include some immoral actions. Ironically the critics failed to see that the severe consequences for such deeds depicted the Victorian moral ideology that “crimes cause their own detection,” thus proving that the novel enforced middle-class morality (228).

As the most controversial character in the novel, Count Fosco is praised and despised by critics and characters alike. Readers and characters tend to either admire his unique character or are disgusted by his shocking ideas and deeds. Fosco was admired for his recognition of Marian Halcombe’s worth, but abhorred for his selfish indulgence. By critics, he was regarded as both “preposterously unnatural” in a 25 August 1860 *Critic* review (85) and “a clever conception” in a *Saturday Review* article from the same day (88). The *Saturday Review* article continues on to state that even though Fosco has clever quirks, if the reader were to

[s]ubtract from him his eccentricities, his Italianisms, and his corpulency— what is left? Simply this, that he is a very undecipherable villain. The author has put him together, just as he puts together his mysterious plots. The only difference is that Mr. Wilkie Collins gives us

the key to the plot, and cannot, or does not, give us any key to the villain.

(88)

Evil, amusing, or poorly devised, Fosco's social status is clearly defined by the solicitor Mr. Gilmore: "Count Fosco, though not a rich man, was not a penniless adventurer either. He has a small, but sufficient income of his own; he had lived many years in England; and he held an excellent position in society" (Collins 147). Additionally, Mrs. Michelson, the housekeeper at Blackwater Park praises the Count's good breeding as "the manners of a true nobleman" and states that: "the advantages of aristocratic birth always show themselves" (353). The Count was not just upper-class, but held a rank, a factor greatly respected by Gilmore, Mrs. Michelson, and society. However, rank is not enough to win the complete trust of the physician Mr. Dawson, Laura, or her sister Marian Halcolmbe. Mr. Dawson distrusts Fosco's medical opinion and refers to him as "that fat old foreigner" (358). The doctor thinks the Count is a "quack" and, as his title is not an English title, discounts the legitimacy of his rank by stating that: "they're all Counts - hang 'em!" (358). Therefore, Dawson represents the popular English egotism of the time that to be foreign was to be lower in society. Mrs. Michelson assumes this ideology is behind Laura's dislike of the Count as well: "I never before met with any lady, of her rank and station, who was so lamentably narrow-minded on the subject of foreigners" (377). This quotation highlights the pervasive stereotypes of the day. Most foreign characters in the Victorian novel are villains, representing the middle-class distrust of otherness. Though this stereotype is common, Mrs. Michelson believes that a true lady should not reveal her ill-will quite as clearly as Laura does. Thus, the stereotype of a lady is also clear in that behavior expectations are held for members of the elevated classes,

such as Laura. The housekeeper is disappointed that Laura does not behave as a lady should. Neither Laura nor Marian explicitly state what quality the Count possesses to make them distrustful. Marian expresses her wariness of the man by writing in her diary: “I certainly never saw a man, in all my experience, whom I should be so sorry to have for an enemy” (219). Whether it be his foreignness, his association with Percival, or his sly behavior, Mr. Dawson, Laura, and Marian are not blinded by rank and cannot fully trust the Count.

Fosco is a multifaceted character, yet his “plans” and “projects” prove his immorality. His plotting includes switching the identity of the dying Anne Catherick, the woman in white, with that of Laura. Fosco confesses:

That conception involved nothing less than the complete transformation of two separate identities. Lady Glyde and Anne Catherick were to change names, places, and destinies, the one with the other- the prodigious consequences contemplated by the change, being the gain of thirty thousand pounds, and the eternal preservation of Sir Percival’s secret.
(591)

This scheme is possible as Anne and Laura share remarkably similar physical characteristics and, unbeknownst to them, a father. Through trickery, chemical aids, and foreign accomplices, Fosco captures the flighty Anne Catherick and has her dead body identified as Lady Glyde; then, he places Laura in an insane asylum under Anne’s name. Fosco crosses the line into immorality through seeking to serve himself and his friend by harming others, enacting a deception of social class, and excessive conniving behavior. Maria Bachman labels Fosco as among the “criminal masterminds who openly defy

conventional morality” (187). Yet, when anticipating questions of wrongdoing, Fosco “emphatically” claims that his conduct is not “worthy of any serious blame” (Collins 603). Fosco insinuates that rather than the deplorable action of taking Lady Glyde’s life, he merely “took her identity instead!” (603). In this regard, Fosco, though still immoral, does retain some moral elements; he could have acted worse.

Through the justice code imposed in the course of the novel, the Count suffers the consequences of his immoral exploits. Though Fosco feels that he followed his own noble rules of conduct by only taking Lady Glyde’s identity, he fails to match with the traditional view of morality. He acts for his own benefit, does not respect the social class system and is extremely dishonest; his methods are immoral and based on the Victorian idea of justice, he deserves punishment. After confessing to the “remarkable events,” Fosco is run out of society, stripped of the clothes that represent his fine life and rank, and brutally murdered (601). The devastating financial, symbolic removal, and physical of all signs of social status is the direct result of his deplorable actions.

The Count does not operate alone; because the Countess Fosco aids in the monstrous schemes, she must receive punishment as well. The Countess assists the Count in his plotting by distracting Marian Halcombe, intercepting letters, stealing Marian’s diary, drugging the maid, Fanny, and separating the trusting Anne Catherick from her protector, Mrs. Clements. The Count acknowledges her role in the appalling events by stating that he had to “avail [himself] of the sublime devotion” of his wife (594). Madame Fosco admits that her actions are completely governed by her husband: “I wait to be instructed” (229). Marriage in England, the Count asserts, does not guarantee a wife the right to judge her husband, but to “love, honour, and obey him. That is exactly what my

wife has done” (602). Countess Fosco was aware of and assisted in criminal activity, but because she was simply following his orders she does not suffer the same fate as her husband. Though functioning as a tool to enable the scheme to proceed, the Countess is still liable to the aforementioned morality codes and is punished by experiencing a decline in social position. She is banished from England and at the end of the novel she is living “in the strictest retirement” (614). Therefore, the Countess is denied an easy and indulgent lifestyle as penance for the extraordinary lengths taken by herself and her husband.

Sir Percival Glyde has rank, but no redeeming qualities; therefore, characters in the novel remain skeptical toward him. Similar to the Count, Sir Percival maintained a high position in society and initially received a positive character reference from the status-conscious Mr. Gilmore, who describes Percival as having “an unassuming delicacy of tone, voice, and manner, which did equal credit to his good breeding and good sense” (128). The solicitor displays the faith he places on status and rank when he and Marian receive a reply from Mrs. Catherick concerning Percival’s involvement in committing Anne to the asylum. In judging the truth of the events, Gilmore remembers “to allow all due force to the high reputation of the gentleman who offered it” (130). Despite his repeated assurances that rank is indicative of a moral man, Gilmore is slightly disturbed by Marian’s reservations and maintains a hesitation concerning Percival that is not present in his estimation of Count Fosco: “she had made me a little uneasy, and a little doubtful” (134). Mrs. Michelson, in contrast, leaves no question as to her perception of Percival’s character. She expresses surprise that a titled man would act so atrociously to his wife: “such a singular want of good breeding in a gentleman of his rank, impressed

me, I own, very painfully” (376). Mrs. Michelson, like many Victorians, has expectations for the aristocracy that Percival fails to meet. The baronet is not respected by his peers either: “Sir Percival had neither friends nor relatives in the neighbourhood . . . He was on the coldest terms - in some cases, the worst terms - with the families of his own rank and station who lived near him” (300). Therefore, though other characters are either praising or uncertain about the Count, they plainly dislike Glyde. The aversion is directly related to his cold demeanor and atrocious temper, which Victorians did not expect to be so blatant among the aristocrats.

Sir Percival fails to meet aristocratic behavior expectations because he is not a legitimate member of the upper class. When his father died without providing a means for Percival to inherit the estate, he “wisely provided for himself. He came to England at once and took possession of the property” (520). Dallas Liddle declares that “many sensation novels implied that both personal and class identity in contemporary Britain were fluid and unstable rather than secure, and thus potentially subject to manipulations of identity . . .” (97). Victorian social station and identity were intricately linked; by assuming a false rank, Percival in essence assumed a new persona. Patricia Ingram finds that social position was an important factor in Victorian existence: it “provided the individual with a personal identity, a role to play, a status and a set of social mores. It was based on the individual, *not* the group” (5). The power to change social standing and, therefore, identity rested solely upon the individual. Victorian middle-class readers trusted in a just status system, longed to ascend to prominence, and respected rightful social migration. Ideology required that one be born into the aristocracy or earn superior station through hard work. Therefore, an individual falsely implanting himself in the

gentry would be an ultimate transgression. Sir Percival's theft of rank "struck at the heart of middle-class insecurities about crime, playing on fears that society was rife with clever criminals who elude capture, capable of imposing themselves upon unwary respectable people as 'gentleman' and 'ladies'" (Wynne 57). In this instance, *The Woman in White* mocks the faith that Victorians placed in the aristocracy; through the system of social rewards and punishments based on characters' deeds, the novel asserts that individuals should be judged by their actions, not by their title.

Sir Percival experiences a violent death as a direct consequence of his usurpation of rank. Unlike the Count, Percival does not accept responsibility for his crimes and perseveres in his deception. He returns to Old Whelmington to forge marriage documents in the church vestry, thus making his birth and inheritance legitimate, and implicates Mrs. Catherick in the process. She recounts Percival's cold heartedness by stating that: "he told me, plainly, that it was his interest to let my husband and all my neighbours believe the falsehood . . . the mean imposter! The cowardly blackguard!" (Collins 523-524).

Percival continually attempts to protect his secret; when he perceives Anne as a threat, he has her committed to an insane asylum and when he senses Hartright's agenda, he has the drawing master followed and attacked. The serious consequences of Percival's secret are explained by Hartright:

The disclosure of that secret might, in past years, have hanged him - might now transport him for life. This disclosure of that secret, even if the sufferers by his deception spared him the penalties of the law, would deprive him, at one blow, of the name, the rank, the estate, the whole social existence that he had usurped. This was the Secret, and it was mine!

A word from me; and house, lands, baronetcy, were gone from him for ever - a word from me, and he was driven out into the world, a nameless, penniless friendless outcast! (500)

Percival has no remorse for any of his actions. As Laura foreshadows that: “crimes cause their own detection,” Glyde succeeds in bringing his own downfall in effort to protect his crimes (228). The baronet cannot rightfully retain his rank once the lie is known. He ultimately receives the punishment which so terrified Mrs. Catherick: death. When Percival dies at the scene of his crime, the church, it is clear that he is being punished for the social class usurpation more than the misdeeds toward Laura. Therefore, Victorian audiences likely viewed the status theft as the greater of his two sins.

Just as Madame Fosco is punished for aiding her husband, Mrs. Catherick, through a social fall, must suffer the consequences of her collusion with Sir Percival. Mrs. Catherick descends in society when her neighbors perceive her wrongdoing. Though judged for adultery, a crime she did not commit, according to Victorian social codes she still deserves punishment for collaborating in the theft of rank. Mrs. Catherick cannot retain her status in society after she is perceived as a transgressor. As one of the most class-conscious characters in the novel, this is the ultimate punishment for her. She represents the middle-class longing for social ascension and is determined to make her place in society. For years, her goal was to reclaim station, the only thing that matters to her:

I came here a wronged woman. I came here robbed of my character and determined to claim it back. I've been years and years about it- and I *have* claimed it back. I have matched the respectable people fairly and openly,

on their own ground. . . . I stand high enough in this town to be out of your reach. *The clergyman bows to me.* (478)

Mrs. Catherick understands the power of rank and wealth; she understands why Sir Percival committed his forgery. She is slowly ascending the social ladder; however, due to Mrs. Catherick's crime, she will never be able to regain her original status in the neighborhood.

Though a victim of Fosco's plotting, Lady Glyde fails to meet Victorian moral conventions when she marries one man while loving another; as a direct consequence, Laura plummets from her high station in society. She confesses her love for another man, Walter Hartright, to Sir Percival in hopes that he will release her from their engagement; she will not sever the engagement because it was arranged by her father. The "sweet-tempered and charming" woman has her own perception of morality; she believes proper decorum is following obligation, not following what is right for the individual (37).

When explaining to Marian her moral obligations, Laura states that: "I can never claim my release from my engagement . . . Whatever way it ends, it must end wretchedly for *me*. All I can do, Marian, is not to add the remembrance that I have broken my promise and forgotten my father's dying words . . ." (161). Though following her own sense of propriety, Laura's sin is giving herself in marriage while loving another man, an adultery of the heart. Laura acknowledges her crime by stating that she is "the most wretched of her sex, if she must give herself in marriage when she cannot give her love" (169). Yet, though Lady Glyde realizes she is wrong in marrying Sir Percival, she proceeds because of her sense of moral obligation. Percival's words and actions illustrate the severity of her choice. He arranges for the "infernal vagabond of a drawing master," his own label for

Hartright, to be followed in London before his departure (325). In the pivotal conversation overheard by Marian, Percival says to the Count: “. . . I happen to be an encumbrance in the way of another man. She was in love with him, before she married me - she's in love with him now. . . . The scoundrel's as sweet on my wife as she is on him” (325). Even the unscrupulous Percival understands the impropriety of marrying while loving another. Fosco and Percival are only able to plot and destroy Laura once she has married the baronet. Through their scheme she loses her money, her position in society, and is placed in an insane asylum. Placement in the asylum is the lowest position Laura reaches; insanity was a level lower than poverty. All identity has been stripped away. Laura's sin has consequences; because of her poor choice, she falls in society losing station, wealth, and name.

Marian Halcombe allows her sister to proceed with a false marriage and is punished with a social fall that mirrors Laura's. Though her descent is similar to that of her sister, Marian does not lose rank, or title, like Laura, but only station, her position in society. Miss Halcombe, like Gilmore and Mrs. Michelson, is truly aware of social position. She first introduces herself and situation by acknowledging: “I have got nothing” (37). Her sister is the one with the fortune and earns a rank, Marian merely holds a privileged status. Despite a class-conscious attitude, when Marian asks Hartright to leave the house, she states that it is not because he is of a lower station than her sister, but because she is following the same moral obligations as Laura. She informs Hartright that:

It is a real true relief to me that I am not obliged, in what I have now to say, to enter into the question- the hard and cruel question as I think it- of

social inequalities. Circumstances which will try *you* to the quick, spare *me* the ungracious necessity of paining a man who has lived in friendly intimacy under the same roof with myself by any humiliating reference to matters of rank and station. . . . [I]t would be equally my duty to say it, under precisely the same serious necessity, if you were the representative of the oldest and wealthiest family in England. You must leave us, not because you are a teacher of drawing . . . but because Laura Fairlie is engaged to be married. (71)

Though she is repeatedly stating that class does not matter, her numerous references to station demonstrate that it is a factor. If Hartright belonged to a higher social station, Marian perhaps would have been more willing to persuade Laura from her untrue marriage. The sisters share such a bond that Laura's choice to marry Percival is a decision that affects both of their futures. Their paths align: they both lose all their money, they must live in poverty together, and they finally regain a comfortable home together. Neither sister chooses what is best, but what is expected. Marian temporarily falls in society because she failed to act properly.

Walter Hartright begins the novel as a middle-class character; his position illuminates the focus on class throughout the novel. When Hartright's Italian friend, Professor Pesca, first introduces the drawing master opportunity at Limmeridge House, the teacher is stated to be "treated there on the footing of a gentleman," which Hartright's sister exclaims to be "such gratifying terms of equality!" (19-20). This conversation and background information concerning the family patriarch indicate that this employment position would be higher than what Hartright is accustomed to. Though his family

maintains a comfortable existence, they are by no means wealthy. Middle-class readers would have identified with the excitement of such an opportunity. Hartright is accepted as a friend by Marian, Laura, and Mrs. Vesey, the governess, but his treatment by Frederick Fairlie is hardly a demonstration of equality. Though during their first meeting Fairlie claims that: “there is none of the horrid English barbarity of feeling about the social position of an artist,” in his house, he welcomes Hartright by asserting: “so glad to possess you at Limmeridge” (43). Fairlie immediately indicates that he does not consider Hartright as a subordinate, but worse, as a possession. Gilmore also recognizes the drawing master’s lower social status when they meet in London shortly prior to Laura’s marriage. Gilmore does not recognize the other man’s right to ask about Laura and reflects that:

However accidentally intimate he might have been with the family at Limmeridge, I could not see that he had any right to expect information on the private affairs; and I determined to drop him, as easily as might be, on the subject of Miss Fairlie’s marriage. (153)

Therefore, Gilmore believes that any gentlemanly status held at Limmeridge remained behind when Hartright left the house. When writing to Marian, Walter acknowledges his own lesser station in relation to Sir Percival by stating that he, Walter, “has no right to offer an opinion on the conduct of those who are above him” (164). Hartright’s own opinion of his place in society and references by other characters demonstrate the importance of social station. Class was not just a label, but a factor that affected multiple aspects of life.

Only once Laura falls in society and Walter becomes her social superior, is he able to fight for her class reinstatement and love, thus proving his moral worth. As Hartright and Laura both occupy the lower-class system, the drawing master now becomes her superior because he is male. Hartright feels that he can fight for Laura and challenge the aristocracy, Fosco and Glyde, because he is seeking morality. He is striving for Laura's benefit, for her rightful social class, and for the truth, all of which were integral to Victorian moral standards. He is able to fight for her and marry her only because she is stripped of her identity and rank; Walter states that: "with every worldly advantage gone from her; with all prospect of recovering her rank and station more doubtful; with no clearer future before her than the future which her husband can provide - the poor drawing-master may harmlessly open his heart at last" (552). Laura redeems her earlier marriage decision by accepting Hartright as her husband; he is allowed to propose not just because they are now in the same social class, but because he has proven himself worthy through his perseverance. However, Elizabeth Langland suggests that Hartright is fighting not only for Laura's love and station, but also for his own social position: "[Laura] exists as an embodiment of an ideal, and Walter's determination to have her recognized again as an heiress suggests that she is a locus for his class ambitions rather than his sexual desires" (73). Indeed, it is through his fight for Laura's position, that Hartright gains his own elevated social status. A higher social position generally entails obtaining property, which sadly Laura is considered. Instead of being possessed as he had been with Mr. Fairlie, Hartright takes on a possessor role toward Laura. When declaring to fight for her position, Hartright asserts that she now belongs to him:

In the right of her calamity, in the right of her friendlessness, she was mine at last! Mine to support, to protect, to cherish, to restore. Mine to love and honour as father and brother both. Mine to vindicate through all risks and all sacrifices - through the hopeless struggles against Rank and Power, through the long fight with armed deceit and fortified Success, through the waste of my reputation, through the loss of my friends, through the hazard of my life. (Collins 407)

In his new power role, Hartright continually struggles for Laura's identity and proves his moral worth; his quest includes interviews, investigations, assaults against him, and large amounts of time and effort. He is constantly challenged, yet he continues to fight for what is right. Hartright epitomizes Victorian middle-class morality by fighting for what is appropriate, helping others, and understanding the rules of the social class system. His never-ending effort allows him to marry Laura and rise in social status when she regains her identity. Not only does the recognition of his wife's true position cause Hartright to rise in society, but his son, the Heir of Limmeridge, gains wealth and land as well through the death of Mr. Fairlie. If Laura's identity had not been recognized, the child could not have inherited the estate; therefore, the battle fought for morality also wins the Hartrights' legacy.

Laura and Marian are the only characters who redeem their original station in the novel; they are able to do so by relying on a moral man, Hartright. At the end of the novel, Laura and Marian are reinstated as the mistresses of Limmeridge House. Their return to social status after their simultaneous falls are not easy or achieved alone. The sisters fell because they followed a false sense of moral obligation. However, they begin

to redeem themselves when Marian rescues Laura from the insane asylum. At this critical moment in the novel, Marian chooses to act for what is best for Laura; this determination aligns with Victorian moral code as Marian is now pursuing what is right for another. Marian realizes that her passive acceptance of obligation was immoral. "Virtue is not a set of regulations to which the sisters must blindly adhere, but a guide to action which emerges from within," states Peter Tohms; "to be good, they must find and exercise their own convictions; they must renounce passivity and 'gnaw at the bars' of the 'cage' that restrains" (67). Therefore, by pursuing what is owed to Laura, Marian regains her morality. Just as Marian was pulled down the social ladder with her sister's fall, Laura is brought back from the depths of the society and begins to ascend the social system with her sibling. However, Marian and Laura cannot fully redeem themselves. Walter finds them after they have been turned out from Limeridge house; their uncle refuses to accept Laura's identity. At this point in the story, their voices are silenced. Walter speaks for the women to relate their experiences. He states:

I shall relate both narratives, not in the words (often interrupted, often inevitably confused) of the speakers themselves, but in the words of the brief, plain, studiously simple abstract which I committed to writing for my own guidance, and for the guidance of my legal adviser. So the tangled web will be most speedily and most intelligibly unrolled. (Collins 407)

Walter not only tells the women's stories, but tells them in his own words. He describes their words as "interrupted" and "confused;" most likely he is referring to the emotional nature of their womanly language (407). He erases their voices and replaces them with blunt, masculine discourse. After Hartright takes on the case of reclaiming Laura's

identity, the women fade into the background. Marian, the woman who was strong enough to spy on criminal conversation and rescue her sister, is now a mere support system for Hartright. Laura, always a weak individual, becomes useless and childlike. The women are able to pull themselves out of the worst social situation of their lives, but not regain their original status without Hartright's help. Though the women thwart part of the scheme against them, they must have the benefit of a moral male protector to completely regain social station.

Walter's rise to the upper class proves that the novel was not written for less moral or lower classes. As status is so key to *The Woman in White*, the fact that the only character able to rise in and retain social status is a middle-class man indicates that the sensation novel did follow a moral code, yet it was one that solely applied to male society. Though good women overall, Laura and Marian must wait for Hartright's help after they are victimized and cannot regain their status on their own; they must have a man come and fight for them. Morality can take a woman only so far; this indicates that the novel was indeed a product of its own time. Additionally, it is not the scandalous acts that receive the most attention throughout the novel, but the middle-class quest for station. Hartright is able to obtain his goal through the middle-class values of hard work and morality. A novel written for lower-classes would not focus on these elements. While lower-class readers simply sought thrilling tales, middle-class readers, who respected the social system and longed to break into the aristocracy, read with the hope that their own lives could change. Hartright's social rise represents the fantasy that being an upright citizen is enough to secure a preferred social identity.

Collins is often considered the father of the sensation genre; *The Woman in White* was just one of many novels that received attacks for immorality. This genre is known for, as Graham Law states, setting “improper and mysterious events within respectable domestic environments” (24). Yet, it is these acts, which made the novel and the genre popular, that blinded critics to the true nature of the work. Though critics denounced the novel as immoral, the harsh punishments for misdeeds condemn such behavior and encourage middle-class morality. Perhaps to some this is the most shocking element of *The Woman in White*: it is moral. Collins’s work prompted not just shock and surprises, but a genre that continues to spark controversy to this day.

Chapter II

The “Secret” is in Morality:

Lady Audley’s Secret and Women’s Power Struggles

“She defied him with her blue eyes, their brightness intensified by the triumph in their glance. She defied him with her quiet smile--a smile of fatal beauty, full of lurking significance and mysterious meaning . . .” (Braddon 217). And so, Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s eponymous femme fatale, Lady Audley, continually challenges her male antagonist, Robert Audley. Their veiled and mesmerizing battle is just one of the numerous power struggles between the sexes in the popular sensation novel *Lady Audley’s Secret*. The novel, first only partially serialized in *Robin Goodfellow* in 1861 before the magazine ceased publication and later serialized in full from January to December 1862 in *Sixpenny Magazine*, followed quickly on the heels of Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1859-60). Braddon acknowledged the influence Collins had on her own sensation writing by claiming that he “is assuredly my literary father” (qtd. in Wynne 19). Braddon indeed inherited Collins’s aptitude for writing about shocking crimes in labyrinthine plots which earned her, like her patriarchal figure, accusations of immorality from critics. As with Collins’s work, the outrage was misdirected, since *Lady Audley’s Secret* actually encourages morality.

Each conflict in the story, secrets versus truth, rich versus poor, laziness versus diligence, the past versus the present reality, is deepened by the additional tension of

male versus female. The women continually struggle for domestic power, dominance, or influence over their male counterparts. The novel proves that women can temporarily gain power through illicit means; these actions earned the novel a reputation for immorality. Yet, those characters who dishonorably obtain power are unable to retain their influence over the opposite sex and lose everything. In contrast, the women who generally follow more conventional Victorian moral standards not only gain, but sustain power over males. Thus, the novel proves its morality by claiming that only moral women can reign in the home.

Granting women such power was potentially controversial in Victorian England, yet Braddon masks this controversy through the restriction that only moral women may perpetually wield influence over men. Though Victorian society generally limited women's power to the domestic sphere, the women's homes and communities, this influence significantly affected everyday lives. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall observe: "[w]omen have both the time, the moral capacity and the influence to exercise real power in the domestic world. It was their responsibility to re-create society from below" (311). Their dominance in the home could not only potentially serve their own desires, but also affect the treatment of servants or dependent families in the neighborhood. A proper demonstration of power in the home could influence her family's reputation and lifestyle, allowing the woman control in one of the few places she could achieve it in Victorian society. Davidoff and Hall claim: "[i]nfluence was the secret of women's power and that influence, as wives and mothers, meant that they did not need to seek other kinds of legitimation" (311). Therefore, a woman's goal was to gain domestic power, the ultimate validation in her world. As evidenced by the lack of rights, female

influence over men was tolerated, but not openly accepted or encouraged. By allowing feminine dominance, the novel is discreetly balancing gender roles in society. Nicole Fisk affirms: “Braddon presents extraordinarily modern ideas about female equality in *Lady Audley’s Secret*, but she masks those ideas well in a seemingly conservative nineteenth-century novel” (26). Braddon uses the morality enforced in the novel to mask the controversial topic. Immoral females are not allowed to continually wield influence over males, an idea much too shocking even for sensation novels. Power is retained only by moral women. Lillian Nayder agrees that *Lady Audley’s Secret* actually follows Victorian ideas of morality. She asserts that the novel has a “conservative bent” and that Braddon displays “her willingness to support the patriarchal norms and traditions” (36). Therefore, though encouraging the modern idea that women can maintain power over men, the novel simultaneously advocates the Victorian idea that morality is preferable for success in society.

Lady Audley, formerly known as Helen Maldon, Helen Talboys, and Lucy Graham, learns early in life that she can gain influence over men through her childlike beauty and mannerisms. Lady Audley first discovered the power of her beauty in her father’s home when she was still known as Helen Maldon. In recounting her history she states:

As I grew older I was told that I was pretty--beautiful--lovely--bewitching. I heard all these things at first indifferently; but by-and-by I listened to them greedily, and began to think that in spite of the secret of my life I might be more successful in the world’s great lottery than my companions.
(Braddon 350)

Yet, Lady Audley is clever and realizes that it is not just physical appearance that will raise her status and gain her power. She understands that to obtain her goals she must act the part of a lady. She is deeply conscious of mannerisms, customs, and what society expects of her. Himmelfarb explains that this ideology was common to Victorian society: “[t]he Victorians thought it no small virtue to maintain the appearance, the manners, of good conduct even while violating some moral principle, for in their demeanor they affirmed the legitimacy of the principle itself” (211). Therefore, by giving the appearance of small morals, as Himmelfarb explains, to include “able manners, toilet habits, conventions of dress, appearance, conversation, greeting and all the other ‘decencies’ of behavior,” Lady Audley conceals the depth of her immoral character (210). Though she is trying to hide her crimes, she continues to make visits in the community, go to balls and dinners, and play the piano for her husband; she understands that in Victorian society, appearances are vital to success. Through her beauty and gentle ways she draws men into her captivating power:

For you see Miss Lucy Graham was blessed with that magic power of fascination by which a woman can charm with a word or intoxicate with a smile. Every one loved, admired, and praised her. . . Her employer; his visitors; her pupils; the servants; everybody, high and low, united in declaring that Lucy Graham was the sweetest girl that ever lived.

(Braddon 6)

Additionally, George Talboys, her first husband, claims that it was “love at first sight” and her second husband, Sir Michael, “could no more resist the tender fascination of those soft and melting blue eyes” (18 and 6). Therefore, this many-named woman

understands that the best way to gain power is through her beauty and attitude; she uses these weapons successfully to enchant those around her and hide her true nature.

Lady Audley twice uses her charms to marry well and gain power and position. The reader is first introduced to Lady Audley as Sir Michael Audley's "pretty young wife" (4). The introduction immediately establishes the two most important aspects of her character: that her looks are of utmost importance and that she is defined by her relationship to men. Lady Audley admits that both of her marriages were for gain and that she does "not love any one in the world" (11). Though she does not love, and perhaps does not understand love, she quickly learns the importance of an advantageous match. When first discovering her beauty Helen Maldon thinks her "ultimate fate in life depended upon my marriage" (350). This belief was quite applicable in Victorian society. Mitchell confirms that:

given the state of matrimonial law, the decision to marry defined a woman's entire future. Marriage established her rank, role, duties, social status, place of residence, economic circumstances, and way of life. It determined her comfort, her physical safety, her children's health, and ultimately--perhaps--even her spiritual well-being. (267)

The only way for a woman to hold any power was through marriage; consequently, Lady Audley knew that she must use all her charms not only to obtain a husband, but also to dominate him. She marries George Talboys to escape the poverty she knew under her father's care, but soon their money is gone. Because of her vanity, Helen Talboys can not stand the poverty she is sinking back into and she then "upbraided George Talboys for his cruelty in having allied a helpless girl to poverty and misery" (Braddon 352). The effect

of these words on George is immediate; he leaves his home country in order to seek a better life for his cherished bride. Her power over him is so complete that he endures hardships to satisfy her needs. However, Helen is not willing to wait for the husband who left her and again sets out to meet her goals. After changing her name to Lucy Graham and becoming a poor governess, she meets and marries the baronet, Sir Michael Audley. Despite the name change and his desertion, Lucy and George are still married, but she disregards this fact as wealth and power are again at her feet. Though in that first introduction Lady Audley is merely introduced as Sir Michael's wife, implying that he possesses her, this impression is soon disrupted, as the narrator reveals the true nature of the marriage: "so complete was the dominion which Lady Audley had, in her own childish, unthinking way, obtained over her devoted husband, that it was very rarely that the baronet's eyes were long removed from his wife's pretty face" (55). Again, her looks are emphasized, but now it is clear that it is those childlike looks that provide the lady with complete power over her husband. Lady Audley is well aware of her power and when preparing to deceive her devoted spouse she asserts: "I can twist him which way I like. I can put black before him, and if I say it is white, he will believe me" (282). She understands that her beauty allows her power, and she craves the dominance over men. Elizabeth Steere agrees: "Lady Audley . . . is unwilling to relinquish her new-found authority to men, and although she acts as a childlike dependent of her husband, she continues to wield her own private power" (306). Once she has determined how to obtain power over men, Lady Audley refuses to yield and commits atrocious acts to maintain her influence.

However, because of her sinful and immoral actions, Lady Audley's influence over men cannot last and she ultimately cedes power to her male aggressors, Robert Audley and Luke Marks. There is no doubt that Lady Audley is immoral and that she committed several misdeeds. She knowingly entered into bigamy; she abandoned her child; she lied continually; she stole items from Robert Audley; she pushed George Talboys down a well in a murder attempt and again attempted to kill through arson. What remains questionable is her claim that she did all this because she was insane. The psychological physician Dr. Mosgrave contends that, despite her actions: "she employed intelligent means, and she carried out a conspiracy which required coolness and deliberation in its execution" (Braddon 377). Though the doctor maintains that Lady Audley used reason for her crimes, he does admit that she is "dangerous" (379). Nicole Fisk explains: [a]lthough Lady Audley is not guilty of murder, she is guilty of overstepping a woman's boundaries, and is therefore dangerous to patriarchal society" (25). Her dangerous acts prove her immorality and based on the rules in place throughout the novel, Lady Audley cannot maintain power because of her sinfulness. She loses power over George Talboys when he chooses to withdraw himself from her after his fall down the well; he forgives her and retreats from the situation and from her power. Additionally, when Sir Michael hears only part of her story, he too walks away and removes himself from her influence. Though she had and lost dominance over her husbands, the only man that was never in Lady Audley's power was the poor, drunk Luke Marks. Luke, the husband of her maid, Phoebe, learns Lady Audley's secret that she attempted to murder her first husband. This places him in considerable power over her, which he uses to blackmail her for financial support. Luke is one of the few characters to

recognize Lady Audley for what she is and refuses to respect her or the money she pays. He states: “damn her kindness! . . . It ain’t her kindness as we want, gal, it’s her money. She won’t get no snivellin’ gratitude from me. Whatever she does for us she does because she is obliged, and if she warn’t obliged she wouldn’t do it” (Braddon 320). Therefore, Luke and Phoebe are only able to start their own inn and life together because of the secret they hold. Lady Audley cannot escape from Luke’s power and, therefore, treats him scornfully. However, the reader does not learn until the end of the story that Luke had additional power over Lady Audley. He could have informed her that George Talboys lived, but because of her attitude he choose to withhold this information and keep her under his control longer.

Like Luke Marks, Robert Audley concludes the novel with power over the conniving Lady Audley. Though he is at first charmed by her pretty face and considers that he could fall in love with his aunt, Robert gains power over her through his investigation into the disappearance of his friend George Talboys and Lady Audley’s past. Though Robert is a barrister, he has never conducted a case and seems merely to float through his lazy life. Once he determines to solve the mystery, however, he proves his intelligence and capability. Herbert Klein contends that it is Robert’s analytical abilities that grant him control over his childish aunt: “[r]atiocination is a male preserve that gives men power over women, and in *Lady Audley’s Secret* it is indeed used to subjugate unruly women” (162). Although the argument of male intellectual superiority is not accurate in all literature or reality, it is applicable in this case. Robert legitimates his career and own life through his detective process; he gains power over Lady Audley as he unearths each villainous act. Robert succeeds in exposing Lady Audley’s many secrets

and has her placed in an insane asylum where she eventually dies. Fisk maintains: “[w]hether one is meant to read Lady Audley’s containment as Braddon’s approval of conservatism, and therefore patriarchal power, or as Braddon’s recognition of a woman’s disadvantage in patriarchal society, the general consensus is that, in the end, the transgressive woman is successfully suppressed” (24). She is suppressed as a direct result of her misdeeds; it is specifically Lady Audley’s violations of traditional propriety that enable these two men to wield power.

Phoebe Marks shares many characteristics with her mistress and similarly gains power over her husband and moves up in society through immoral actions. Phoebe resembles Lady Audley in looks; Lady Audley remarks that Phoebe may look as good as her with a little bit of help. However, the two do not just share similar looks, but the same desires, vanity, and sinful natures. The maid also understands the importance of marriage and sees that Luke Marks and his blackmailing Lady Audley may be her best chance to gain a higher station. Steere states: “Phoebe’s all-consuming pride leads her to the dangerous belief that there are no inherent differences among the Victorian social classes, and thus she, too, could rise to the top” (312). Phoebe recognizes the similarities between herself and her lady; she sees how Lady Audley has been able to rise through marriage and, though not expecting the same extravagant wealth, expects her marriage to benefit her. Steere contends: “Phoebe’s attempt to rise in the social strata is perhaps one of her most understandable sins, it is also the most egregiously subversive to Victorian society at large” (312). Contemporary readers would have understood the desire to gain wealth and position, but abhorred the methods employed to achieve the goal. Throughout the novel, Phoebe continues to mimic Lady Audley through her decorating, dress, and

immoral behavior. Phoebe does not commit the crimes that Lady Audley does, but witnesses and hides them. She is excessively envious of her mistress; she rants: “why, what was she in Mr. Dawson’s house only three months ago? . . . What was she but a servant like me?” (27). Phoebe is sharp and self-seeking; when she finds the hidden bootie amongst her mistress’s belongings and then witnesses the meeting between George Talboys and his wife, she realizes her own sway over Lady Audley. She says to Luke: “she is in my power . . . And she’ll do anythin in the world for us if we keep her secret” (430). Phoebe understands her power, but is too overcome with it to realize the importance of her secret.

Yet, Phoebe’s dominance is provisional and her immorality causes her to yield power to her brutish husband and eventually lose all she had gained. For only a brief time Phoebe has more power than Luke; she knows her lady’s secrets and how to use those secrets to her advantage. However, as soon as she shares the confidences, which are the same as Lady Audley’s, she concedes power to her husband. In fact, Phoebe claims that she did not willingly tell, but states that: [h]e forced it from me, or I would never, never have told” (109). Though she marries in hopes of regaining her power, she is unsuccessful and her husband dominates her life. Other women in the novel may only hold power if they display moral traits; this standard prohibits the immoral Phoebe from maintaining power. Her husband treats her cruelly and she complains to Lady Audley: “[y]ou can’t tell how hard he can be upon me if I go against him. . . . He drove me down with his loud blustering talk, and he make me come” (301). Even on his deathbed Luke maintains control over his wife: “[t]he sick man’s feeble hand pointed to the door, through which his wife departed submissively” (412). If Phoebe had acted in a more moral manner and

followed the conventions of society, she perhaps would have been more successful in maintaining her power. Yet, always the same as her mistress, she must submit to men as a punishment for her transgressions. In contrast to Lady Audley, Phoebe has the hope of a future. Though she loses everything she had gained, her high position at Audley Court, her home, her belongings, her marriage, she also loses her husband and has the ability to start over. Fisk contends that Phoebe will finally achieve her goals:

[a]t the end of the novel, Phoebe has the freedom to fashion a new self, as well as the memory of Lady Audley's encouragement to do so. Phoebe's cunning, evinced by her ability to manipulate Lady Audley in money matters, leaves the reader with little doubt of her eventual success. (26)

Phoebe does indeed have the knowledge and skill to gain the power she so craves, but only if her new path is righteous will she achieve her goals.

In contrast to these two women, who in consequence of their immorality cannot maintain their power over men, Alicia Audley grew up as the prideful, but overall well-mannered and dominant female in Audley Court, who must initially yield her power to another female. Raised by only her father, Alicia is described as having "reigned supreme in her father's house since her earliest childhood, and had carried the keys" (Braddon 4). Alicia was the only woman in the house and her strong, willful personality easily gained dominance over her indulging father. Alicia's only sins are her pride and jealousy of her new stepmother. It is when Lady Audley enters the house that these sins are enhanced, causing Alicia to lose her power in the home. The daughter is pushed aside as the new mistress enters the home: "Miss Alicia's day was over; and now, when she asked anything of the housekeeper, the housekeeper would tell her that she would speak to my

lady, or she would consult my lady, and if my lady pleased it should be done” (4). She is severely hurt when she loses her power and does not fall under her stepmother’s charm as others do. Katherine Montwieler contends that Alicia does not trust Lady Audley because, as Alicia is an actual moral lady, she sees past Lucy’s pretty looks and polite manners to discover her true nature: “[t]he real lady --who sports the blood of the Audleys in her veins --recognizes an imposter (a woman tricked out for a masquerade) when she sees one” (49). Perhaps it is because of her injured pride that Alicia is able to see past Lady Audley’s alluring loveliness. The reaction of her favorite dog, Caesar, who snaps and growls at the petite woman emphasizes Alicia’s doubt of her stepmother. Alicia attempts to alert her father that Lady Audley is not as pure as she presents herself: “I’ve seen her do cruel things with those slender white fingers, and laugh at the pain she inflicted” (Braddon 103). Sir Michael proves he is no longer loyal to his daughter and merely replies that he will kill the dog that threatens Lady Audley.

Despite her pride, Alicia signifies traditional Victorian morality and concludes the novel with power over both her father and husband. Though he cannot love and never understands Alicia, Robert does acknowledge Alicia’s positive traits: she’s a dear girl . . . a generous-hearted, bouncing, noble English lassie” (262). He recognizes his cousin’s worth, but finds her imperfect for his own tastes. Despite Robert’s opinion, Alicia serves as a representative of an obedient Victorian lady. She does not flirt as outrageously as Lady Audley; she has a deep respect for her father and her responsibilities to him; she is well accomplished and understands social norms. For example, when she walks in on Lady Audley and Phoebe talking and laughing, “Alicia, who was never familiar with her servants, withdrew in disgust at my lady’s frivolity” (58). Miss Audley understands

Victorian boundaries and dares not to cross them as Lady Audley does. These strong conservative values indicate that Alicia is worthy of the complete power that was denied to Lady Audley and Phoebe. Alicia agrees to accompany her father when he leaves Audley Court upon discovering the truth concerning Lady Audley. She takes complete control over Sir Michael in order to distract him in his distraught state and to aid his recovery. Robert encouraged Alicia to “force” Sir Michael “into action” and

Alicia had immediately acted upon this advice, had resumed her old empire as a spoiled child, and reminded her father of a promise he had made of taking her through Germany. With considerable difficulty she had induced him to consent to fulfilling this old promise, and having once gained her point, she had contrived that they should leave England as soon as it was possible to do so, and she told Robert, in conclusion, that she would not bring her father back to his old house until she had taught him to forget the sorrow associated with it. (398)

Therefore, in a single paragraph Alicia not only takes control of her father, but exerts her power with force. The words used to describe her actions “acted,” “induced,” “gained,” “contrived,” “bring,” and “taught” are all active verbs indicating that Alicia is no longer willing to concede her power and will never again desist in her domination (398). It is also obvious that though there is some reluctance, Sir Michael “consents” to his submissive role in Alicia’s “empire” (398).

In the same manner as the other women in the novel, Alicia recognizes that marriage is the ultimate means for her to gain influence. Though she initially refuses the marriage proposal from Sir Harry Towers in hopes of an engagement with her cousin

Robert, Alicia concludes the novel looking forward to her wedding with the baronet. Sir Harry understands Alicia's worth and claims: "I always knew that she was a hundred times too good for me" and that Alicia speaks "nobly and tenderly" (123). Sir Harry's approving opinion of Alicia's good nature makes it clear that he will cede power to his new bride. Though she is vain, envious, and temporarily loses power to Lady Audley, Alicia ultimately proves her moral merit and earns the right to have power over both her father and husband.

Like Alicia, Clara Talboys does not have power throughout much of the novel, but proves her moral strength. When the reader is first introduced to Clara, her character is completely overshadowed by her harsh, unforgiving father. Robert assumes that her quiet and emotionless response to the news of George's death implies the same demeanor as Mr. Harcourt Talboys. She accepts her father's admonitions and seems aloof throughout the entire conversation. However, Clara is merely showing conventional Victorian filial obedience. She respects her father and, though he is unnaturally strict, acquiesces to his authority and forgives his nature. Yet, the strongest example of Clara's good heart is shown through her obvious love for her brother. She claims she will search for him herself if needed. Additionally, her tasteful and simple clothes, her traditional womanly employments of sewing and musical study, and her "passionate energy" all prove that she is a traditional Victorian woman (Braddon 202). The novel presents Clara as the conventional moral lady; the good woman to whom all others in the novel are compared to.

After years of suppression from her father's authority, the moral Clara Talboys seizes power over the lackluster Robert Audley. Midway through the story, Robert

determines that he will give up his investigation into George's disappearance. He cannot bear to think of the pain and suffering his suspicions must bring to his beloved uncle, Sir Michael. He wishes to stop and asks himself: "[w]hy do I go on with this? . . . how pitiless I am, and how relentlessly I am carried on" (172). Robert understands that his actions are no longer his own; he accepts that he is influenced by something greater. He continues: "[i]t is not myself; it is the hand which is beckoning me further and further upon the dark road whose end I dare not dream of" (172). Robert soon determines that his drive is regulated by Clara and her love for her brother George. Though appearing disinterested in her brother's fate before the family patriarch, Clara displays her intense strength and passion by charging after Robert and demanding he continue his investigation. Clara first interacts with Robert by interrupting him and "catching at his wrist" (197). She demands a private conversation with the barrister and takes charge in arranging how to meet secretly. He complies with her requests when she demands of him:

You told my father that you would abandon all idea of discovering the truth--that you would rest satisfied to leave my brother's fate to a horrible mystery never to be solved upon this earth; but you will not do so, Mr. Audley--you will not be false to the memory of your friend. You will see vengeance done upon those who have destroyed him. You will do this, will you not? (199)

Her speech leaves little option for Robert as she claims that if the barrister will not complete the investigation that she will do so herself. Robert complies and realizes that it is Clara's hand that has beckoned him forward on his examination of the mysterious circumstances. Throughout the remainder of his investigation, Robert continually refers

to the hand that pushes him on and accepts its dominance; in doing so, he is accepting Clara's power over him. He states: "I accept the dominion of that pale girl, with the statuesque features and the calm brown eyes . . . I recognize the power of a mind superior to my own, and I yield to it, and bow down to it" (206). The barrister continues his mission only because he is charged to do so by Clara; he cedes to her power because he recognizes her intellectual and moral strength.

In order to solve the mystery, Robert must change his former habits. Miss Talboys demands that the barrister change his lazy ways and complete his duty; in essence, she pushes him to change his entire lifestyle and persona to fit her needs. Vicki Pallo studied Robert's change and determined:

Robert Audley, who in so many ways contradicts the established norms of society, must therefore undergo a transformation in order to fulfill his assumed role. Through this character, Braddon mirrors the reformation of society's enforcers from a group of irresolute, ineffective, and lawless "rogues" to the modern, efficient policing agents that they were fast becoming. Although Robert seems at first to disdain social conventions, he gradually transforms into the very type of person that he formerly resisted. Eventually, he becomes an agent of societal control, wielding his power in order to maintain the acceptable standards of law and discipline within his society. (470)

Therefore, just as Clara models the conventional role of woman in Victorian society, her influence over Robert pulls him from his nonconformist attitude and into a role mirroring her own values. Robert enjoys the dominion she has over his actions: "Miss Talboys

made him happy, by taking him seriously in hand and lecturing him on the purposeless life he had led so long and the little use he had made of the talents and opportunities that had been given to him” (Braddon 436). Therefore, though she is changing Robert’s life, he accepts the changes because they are directed by Clara, a moral Victorian woman. Pallo states: [a]t the novel’s end, he has become a pattern member of society: a successful barrister, a landholder, and a husband. All traces of his previous asocial behavior have disappeared just as surely as Lady Audley herself has, and he is now a ‘model citizen’ of his time” (475). Thus, Clara’s own moral strength provides her the power to influence Robert not just to complete his investigation, but also to change his entire lifestyle.

In addition to her power over Robert during his investigations, Clara increases her dominance in the novel’s conclusion by maintaining power over both her father and her husband. Once Robert has discovered the secret held so long by Luke Marks, that George Talboys still lives, he informs Clara of the news and asks for her hand in marriage. He declares her love and she remains silent. She does not speak when he asks if she wishes for him to go to Australia in search of George. Then he states: “Shall we both go, dearest? Shall we go as man and wife? Shall we go together, my dear love, and bring our brother back between us?” (Braddon 440-41). It is only once Robert includes her in the proposed mission, acknowledges her as an equal part in his actions, and provides her power in the marriage that Clara accepts his proposal. Like the other ladies in the novel, Miss Talboys understands the importance of marriage. Her silence during the proposal is her subtle maneuver to gain what she desires from the marriage: power. Her manner of gaining influence reinforces the readers’ perception of her values; even as she demands dominance over her suitor she remains refined and lady-like. Such mannerisms reinforce

the novel's concept that only moral women may gain and retain power in their relationships. Through her marriage, Clara not only holds power over Robert, but extends her dominance to control her unmovable father. Clara had previously been prohibited from openly searching for her brother, but her marriage actually releases her from her father's suppression and allows her the independence to act as she wishes. Mr. Harcourt Talboys finally accepts Clara's decision to search for her brother only after she is married. Though many would assume that marriage would lead a lady to a more dependent position, as Clara has power over her husband, she has more freedom in marriage than at any other time in her life. For Clara, freedom is power.

Though Robert unlocks the secret concerning Lady Audley and George Talboys, he is merely a pawn for Clara as she pushes him forward; her insistence that Robert move forward is the means through which a resolution is achieved. Thus, Clara Talboys is the most powerful woman, and character, in the novel. Lady Audley, though seeming to reign in her household, cannot maintain her power. Similarly, Phoebe only wields fleeting power over Lady Audley and Luke Marks. Alicia's strong values allow her power over her father and new husband at the end of the novel, but the reader is not shown how Alicia uses her influence to make significant changes. On the surface, Robert seems to control most of the novel: he discovers Lady Audley's secret, he determines her fate, and he finds the truth about George. However, Robert only does so because he is under Clara's control; he acts for her. Clara is able to dominate Robert and control the outcome of the novel because she is a moral woman. Thus, it is the traditional Victorian woman who succeeds in the course of the story. Klein asserts:

Conformity to the female stereotype thus seems to be rewarded in the novel, deviance from it punished. This outcome seems to strengthen patriarchal power, but paradoxically the woman who gives the impression of being the most conformist, namely Clara, is the one who exerts most power in the end. . . . Clara is thus the one who not only passively but actively enforces the values of society. (171)

Therefore, Clara not only influences Robert, but the reader as well. *Lady Audley's Secret* clearly insinuates that power rewards may be maintained solely by the just and honest: those who model traditional values such as parental obedience, family love, and respectability. The variety of women in the novel reflect one another in their actions, but all strive for the same power over men. Klein contends: “[t]hat women are more active and cleverer than men in this novel seems indisputable, but there is a licit and an illicit way in which they may exert their power” (170). The immoral women gain dominance, but only temporarily and then suffer the consequences for their misdeeds. By having Alicia and Clara discover that the key to lasting power lies with proper, moral behavior, Braddon advocates for a moral way of life as a means for women to succeed by the standards of Victorian society. Thus, the secret to permanent power only may be found through morality.

Chapter III

Morality and Moderation:

Self-Control in *East Lynne*

In contrast to peer sensation novelists Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon, whose own risqué lifestyles and extramarital affairs increased the outrage concerning the immorality of their novels, Ellen Wood succeeded in writing sensational works without living a shocking life. Despite a traditional Victorian lifestyle, Wood, created extraordinary scenarios in one of the most famed and lasting sensation novels, *East Lynne* (1860-1861). Yet, Wood disassociates herself from the characters' egregious misdeeds by using Victorian middle-class values and a didactic narrator. Beth Palmer asserts that: “[s]he cultivated a Christian and conservative reputation in order to distance herself from the more dangerous facets of sensationalism even while her fiction worked to elicit sensational effects on its readers” (187). In addition to her reputation, Wood separated herself from immoral events in the novel by weaving moral attributes around the scandalous plots. The method of including Victorian values alongside startling acts is similar to the moral systems in *The Woman in White* by Collins, which allowed only moralistic men to rise, and *Lady Audley's Secret* by Braddon, in which only righteous women may maintain power. Therefore, though critics have claimed the sensation genre sanctions depravity, the abundance of morals and conservative conduct in *East Lynne* actually encourages morality in readers.

Each episode in the novel carefully chronicles how the characters physically and emotionally react to potentially disturbing events. The verbose narrator continually comments on how capable or incapable a character is at controlling his or her emotions. The repeated emphasis on the Victorian middle-class value of self-control renders the trait as one of the most significant features in the novel. Upon closer inspection of this repeated theme, it is clear that the middle and upper classes vary greatly in their ability to manage emotion-filled outbursts. Therefore, the novel suggests that one of the crucial differences between these two classes was not monetary means, but emotional restraint. Throughout *East Lynne* the middle class is more successful than the upper class at maintaining composure. Himmelfarb emphasizes the argument that self-control is a key marker of middle-class ideology:

The ritual order of etiquette, by sternly guarding against slips in bodily and emotion control, assured the individual's deferential participation in the dominant social order. Instead of allowing any outward relaxation, bourgeois etiquette drove the tensions back within the individual self, provided ritual support for the psychological defense mechanisms of repression, displacement, and denial necessary to cope with anxieties of the urban capitalist order. (214)

Therefore, in the Victorian era, self-control was often attributed to the hard-working, moral middle class, in contrast to high society which was viewed as indulgent and rash. The middle class viewed the trait as a necessary component for upward social migration. The narrator, which in this novel generally mirrors traditional middle-class values, views restraint as an honorable and noble trait.

East Lynne praises the self-control exercised by middle-class characters and attributes societal falls to the aristocratic and immoderate personalities. Through the Victorian moral convention of moderation, the novel clearly celebrates the rise of the middle class over the aristocracy. Only those characters who are able to control their passionate acts and speeches are able to rise in social standing; in contrast, those individuals who display unreasonably excessive emotions through actions and words subsequently fall lower in society. By the end of the novel, the main aristocrats, the Vanes and Francis Levison, all fall from an upper-class status as a direct consequence of inordinate reactions and sentiments. Conversely, due to their self-control, the moderate and middle-class Archibald Carlyle and his wife Barbara rise to affluence and respect in the community. Therefore, *East Lynne* does not necessarily advocate that all middle-class individuals should rise or that all aristocrats should fall, but that only those individuals able to show restraint should hold the privilege of upper-class standing. Despite the immoral reputation as a sensation novel, this code of morality and moderation is applied as a necessary element in social climbing and promotes conventional values.

The novel begins by describing an immoral aristocrat, the Earl of Mount Severn who brings the family lifestyle and his own life to an end due to an extravagant mode of living. The first page introduces the earl as having the “unmistakeable look of dissipation” and known “for the most reckless among the reckless, for the most spendthrift among the spendthrifts, for the gamester above all gamesters, and for a gay man outstripping the gay” (Wood 5). Therefore, the earl is known for immoderation above all else. The earl, begins life as William Vane, a hard-working barrister, but he loses all control after inheriting his estate. A lack of emotional management is evidenced

by his impulsive elopement; whereas, a lack of physical regulation is displayed by his profligate lifestyle and even his illness. Lord Mount Severn chronically suffers from gout, an illness commonly known as the rich man's disease. The affliction, often caused by an overindulgent diet, eventually leads to the earl's death. Pressed for money, the earl sells his country home, East Lynne, to a local lawyer, Archibald Carlyle, who keeps the purchase a secret and allows Lord Mount Severn to maintain the residence for the short remainder of the sick man's life. The earl is prevented from providing a legacy for his only child, Lady Isabel, by his own lavish lifestyle. Therefore, even before the funeral, the girl who has grown up in wealth and an easy situation is suddenly left destitute and ignorant as to how to proceed in life.

Lady Isabel's own immoderation is minimal at the beginning of the novel, but it begins to fester and intensify as time passes. Throughout her marriage to Archibald, Isabel is often demure and submissive. Even when ill-treated by her sister-in-law, Cornelia Carlyle, Lady Isabel acquiesces to demands and suppresses emotions. The lonely woman expresses her true feelings about only one matter: Barbara Hare. Barbara, the beautiful daughter of a county justice and sister to the accused murderer Richard Hare, often sees Carlyle on business relating to the murder case. Barbara loves Carlyle, but neither individual acts upon this infatuation. Though Carlyle is unwaveringly faithful to his wife, Isabel leads an idle life that allows her ample time to fret over a suspected romance. While recovering from illness after the birth of their first child, Lady Isabel "clasped hold of him in her emotion" and demands of her husband: "don't marry her" (180). Carlyle dismisses the strength of the outburst as he does not know that "there never was a passion in the world, there never will be one, so fantastic, so delusive, so powerful

as jealousy” (182). However, passion enters into Lady Isabel’s heart and from there self control weakens as envy grows. The jealousy lingers for several years, and she imagines Carlyle’s calm love is a sign of his indifference. Andrew Maunder states that:

The aristocracy is for Wood a species in decline, which can only save itself by a Darwinian process of adaptation to the new economic and moral climate, namely through a process of bourgeoisification. Too much given to idleness and frivolity, it is Isabel’s lack of activity- a marked contrast to the almost manic busyness of Carlyle’s sister- that gives her the time to imagine an intrigue between Mr. Carlyle and Barbara. (64)

The “bourgeoisification” includes the necessary ability to rein in one’s emotions. Isabel’s passionate jealousy is a sign of her immoderation, inability to exert self control, and an eventual fall. In fact, Carlyle’s own moderation serves to increase her raging emotions: “Lady Isabel did not understand the even manner, the quiet calmness into which her husband’s once passionate love had subsided, and in her fanciful jealousy she attributed it to the influence Barbara held upon his memory” (Wood 198). Isabel is raised in an indulgent household and is not taught the necessity of restraint that Carlyle and other middle-class Victorians valued. Consequently, she is less able to control her jealousy and other emotions. She does not understand Carlyle’s excessive restraint and misinterprets his emotions and temper. These differences in class lead to misunderstandings and eventually a gulf between husband and wife.

The increasing companionship between the aristocratic and indulgent Francis Levison and Lady Isabel exacerbates her struggle with immoderation. Again suffering from illness after the birth of a child, Isabel is forced to go to the French seaside to

improve her health. Miss Cornelia denies Isabel the company of the children and business obligations prevent Carlyle from joining the excursion. Francis Levison, who is hiding from creditors, becomes a constant companion to the physically weak woman and she is too emotionally weak to repel his society. Isabel's own sexual passions and "fresh emotions" are awakened, aiding her health (208). Sensing the danger of emotions, Isabel begs Carlyle to allow her to return home; however, once again his own moderate temper cannot sense the strength or threat of her growing emotional state. Levison makes no attempt to conceal his emotions or follow traditional rules of propriety; he immoderately professes love for the married woman. Isabel strives for composure and is able to rebuke the forward man, yet her emotions reign as she returns to the seaside home. When she enters the dwelling, she "brushed past" the servant, "flew up-stairs," tore off gloves, "cried" out demands, and "dashed off a letter to her husband" (216-17). All of these actions indicate her haste, flurry, and, most importantly, lack of control. The lady of the house is no longer calm and collected. However, the emotions in themselves are not inappropriate, but it is how the character displays these emotions that demands an immoderate label. Isabel is flawed not because she has emotions, but because she cannot contain emotion.

Unaware of the situation between his wife and the flirtatious rogue, Carlyle invites Levison to East Lynne, which leads to disastrous consequences for Lady Isabel. Promising to aid Levison in some business matters, Carlyle allows the vain man to sojourn at East Lynne; Isabel, too afraid to voice an opinion and reveal her true emotions, does not stop the visit. During his stay, Barbara Hare and Carlyle secretly communicate more than ever before and believe themselves to be close to catching the real murderer of

George Hallijohn. Sensing Isabel's unease concerning the mysterious meetings, Levison acts to increase her agitation by dropping sly remarks and stating: "[w]ho is that Miss Hare? They appear to have a pretty good understanding together: twice this evening I have met them in secret conversation" (244). Other remarks are made "with miserable exaggeration, to Lady Isabel, whose jealousy, as a natural sequence, grew feverish in its extent" (246). Therefore, Levison feeds the already jealousy-infected mind. Lady Isabel no longer has the self-control to fight off jealousy or feelings for Levison. While in the presence only of her middle-class and steady husband, Isabel is able to check such emotions; however, with Levison, their two aristocratic natures combine to create a passionate force too difficult for Isabel to manage. One evening Carlyle cancels dinner plans in order to take care of urgent business; returning from the dinner party and hurt at being deserted, Isabel witnesses her husband on a moonlit stroll with Barbara. Carlyle and Barbara are actually keeping watch while Richard has a private reunion with his mother, but urged by jealousy and Levison's "whisper that *his* love was left to her," Isabel loses all control (271). Her emotions are no longer held in:

Lady Isabel almost gnashed her teeth: the jealous doubts which had been tormenting her all evening were confirmed. That the man whom she hated --yes, in her blind anger, she hated him then--should so impose upon her, should excuse himself by lies, lies base and false, from accompanying her, on purpose to pass the hours with Barbara Hare! Had she been alone in the carriage, a torrent of passion had probably escaped her. (271)

All reason, all the reassurances of her husband's love and fidelity, have left Lady Isabel who is consumed by overwhelming emotion. "In a moment of wild passion," Lady Isabel

leaves her home, husband, children, reputation, and entire life behind as she escapes to promised happiness with Levison (283). This act, the most notorious and scandalous in the novel, is an act of passion, excessive emotion, and immoderation. As Maunder states:

That the aristocratic Isabel Carlyle's moral and physical degeneration is central to the novel can scarcely be contended, for her every mistake, however excusable, is met with a near-deafening chorus of condemnation, in which the loudest voice is that of the narrator herself. (62)

The narrator seeks to ensure that readers are aware of the severity of Lady Isabel's choice. One cannot expect to retain a high position in society if governed by emotions. Therefore, though Lady Isabel's emotions are at least understandable, the way in which she chooses to act upon them is highly unconventional and disturbing. This immoderation, a sign of her immorality, directly prompts her downfall.

While she gradually acquires self-control, Lady Isabel continues to indulge her own desires. After Levison abandons Isabel and their illegitimate child on the continent, Isabel must learn to provide for herself. No longer a member of polite society, she must slowly build self-control, for society would definitely not approve of emotional outbursts from Isabel in her new position. A plot-fitting train crash kills the illegitimate child and injures the heroine, allowing Isabel to circulate news of her death and create a new identity. Conveniently, the opportunity arises for her to return to East Lynne to serve as a governess for her own children. Barbara, who is now Mrs. Carlyle, hires the disfigured and disguised Isabel. Andrew Mangham observes: "in an age that glorified progress and that amassing of wealth, Isabel's lost status becomes a poignant reminder of the destructive potential of uncontrolled emotion" (131). Isabel is now an employee in the

home that she was once mistress of and reports to the woman who was her social inferior. The first night back at East Lynne is difficult for Lady Isabel and “she knelt down by the bed, and prayed for courage to go through the task she had undertaken, prayed for self-control” (Wood 402). Maintaining a calm demeanor is the only way Isabel can remain near her beloved family; as an employee and a member of a lower class, all sentiment must be suppressed. The secret identity requires that she always have power over her facial expressions, words, mannerisms, and feelings. Isabel is now a servant and thus required to exert restraint: “a hundred times that day did she yearn to hold the children to her heart, and a hundred times she had to repress the longing” (418). Maunder agrees and believes that self-control is the only reason Lady Isabel is able to be with her children: “It is only by controlling (as far as she is ever able to) the ‘impulsive’ and ‘lower’ instincts and taking on the middle class virtues of ‘labour and self sacrifice’ that Isabel herself can be reunited with her children” (67-68).

However, Isabel cannot completely change her nature. Though now a working woman, she was born an aristocrat and it is unnatural for her to suppress all releases of emotion. After speaking with Carlyle, who she still deeply loves, about their dying child, she “tore upstairs to her chamber, and sank down in an agony of tears and despair” (Wood 474). The narrator prompts the grieving woman to maintain control: “Softly, my lady! This is not bearing your cross” (474). Therefore, the narrator reminds Lady Isabel that she conceded the right to show emotions after the flight from East Lynne. Accepting the consequences of that act includes remaining calm. Understandably, Lady Isabel again gives way to her emotions after her son’s death:

Then she lost all self-control. She believed that she had reconciled herself to the child's death, that she could part with him without too great emotion. But she had not anticipated it would be quite so soon . . . Crying, sobbing, calling, she flung herself upon him; she clasped him to her; she dashed off her disguising glasses; she laid her face upon his. (587)

Though socially lower and learning to control her emotions, Isabel's identity as a mother and an aristocrat prohibits constant self-possession.

Regardless of how much control Lady Isabel has exerted during her time at East Lynne, she surrenders all moderation and gives way to her own cravings on her deathbed. The stress of suppression and the death of William aid in the rapid deterioration of the constitutionally fragile woman's health. While dying, Isabel asks to see Carlyle and reveals her true identity. Even the critical narrator understands this last indulgent act: "[I]et people talk as they will, it is impossible to drive out human passions from the human heart. You may suppress them, deaden them, keep them in subjection, but you cannot root them out" (590). Isabel allows herself to talk of her former married life with Archibald, the infamous desertion, and most yielding, of her love for him and their children. She does not attempt to hide any secrets and emotionally begs for forgiveness. Yet, the immoral actions and unrestrained behavior have stained her character forever. Even on her deathbed she gives way to immorality by professing her love for another's husband. Therefore, Isabel dies showing the immoderation that defined her life.

In contrast to Lady Isabel, Francis Levison, the most indulgent and vain character in the novel, never attempts to check his insatiable greed and gives way to every whim. As the novel progresses, the two main story lines, that of Isabel's elopement and the

mysterious murder of George Hallijohn, merge and are linked together by Levison.

Levison's excessive flirtation with Isabel indicates a lack of propriety, as he knowingly induces her flight from East Lynne and the murder of Hallijohn reveals a rash, violent personality. At the time of the murder, Levison is known as Captain Thorn and is courting Hallijohn's youngest daughter, Afy. This alias protects Levison from being discovered earlier, but a flashy style and pompous manner ultimately lead to discovery. Richard Hare mentions to Barbara and Carlyle that the real murderer had "bad taste and style, displaying a profusion of jewelry" and was "vain" (55, 56). Levison's flamboyant style, symbolized by an audacious ring, serves to identify him as the murderer during the trial. Ebenezer James testifies that the man once known as Thorn is actually Levison and states that: "I knew his voice, too; could have sworn to it anywhere: and I could almost have sworn to him, by his splendid diamond ring" (546). Therefore, though trying to keep a low profile, Levison still could not contain his excessive nature, and it aids in his ruin. Levison's most unrestrained action leads to his downfall. The murder of Hallijohn was committed in an act of passion and demonstrates the dangerous nature of unrestrained emotion. After the fatal shot was fired, Levison approached a witness in a "state of excitement" and stated that: "[t]he thing was not premeditated: it was done in the heat of passion" (571). The jury finds Levison guilty of murder, but requests mercy for the man on the basis that the crime "arose out of the bad passions of the moment" (573). Therefore, Levison murders Hallijohn because he was unable and unwilling to control his emotions. This immoderation leads to his immoral actions; as a direct result of these reckless ways, Levison loses all status and is sentenced to lifelong imprisonment.

In contrast to the aristocratic Lady Isabel and Levison, who continuously display immoderate behavior, Barbara Hare only publicly releases her emotions once and then learns to control similar passionate outbursts. Barbara longs for Archibald Carlyle from the beginning of the novel. Though treated as a younger sister by Carlyle, she misinterprets kind words and gifts by expecting a marriage proposal. When Miss Cornelia informs Barbara of Carlyle's sudden marriage to Lady Isabel, Barbara excuses herself from the parlor and escapes to another room. Once alone, the hurt girl gives way to her emotions: "with a sharp wail of despair, Barbara flung her arms up and closed her aching eyes" (134). A servant sees Barbara who "lay in dire anguish; not of body but of mind," and upon hearing a door close, Barbara recalls her emotions (134). Realizing an outburst is imprudent and recognizing "the necessity of outwardly surmounting the distress at the present moment," the young lady quickly recalls her place in society and swallows all emotion (134). The middle-class woman knows the importance of maintaining composure; as "she forced her manner to calmness," Barbara reveals that moderation is not a natural characteristic, but one that must be actively implemented (134). Though emotionally suffering from Carlyle's marriage, the young lady maintains outward composure throughout much of their interaction. Only once does Barbara release her emotions to Carlyle. When asking Carlyle about their companionship, out came her "passion, temper, wrongs, and nervousness, all boiling over together. She was in strong hysterics" (164). The narrator admits that at some times a woman simply cannot contain her emotions: "[t]here are moments in a woman's life when she is betrayed into forgetting the ordinary rules of conduct and propriety; when she is betrayed into making a scene" (163). However, the narrator also insinuates that the outburst and subsequent

embarrassment could have been avoided: “[a] little self-control and Barbara would not have uttered [sic] words that must remain on her mind hereafter . . .” (163). Therefore, the narrator accepts that Barbara has these strong emotions, but chastises the manner in which they are released. Once again, this insinuates that it is the mere management of passion that is so necessary to middle-class etiquette. This episode is Barbara’s only public emotional outburst in the novel and, like the narrator, Carlyle encourages composure. Barbara regains and maintains her poise throughout the novel. Though it is difficult, she recognizes the necessity and importance of presenting a calm exterior, despite raging emotions.

After the meeting, Barbara strives to maintain composure and does not repeat the outburst: “[n]ever, since that evening of agitation, had Barbara suffered herself to betray emotion to Mr. Carlyle: her manners to him had been calm, courteous, and indifferent” (189). Sentimental responses are the biggest differences between Carlyle’s two wives. Both are beautiful, loving wives and mothers, yet Isabel cannot maintain self-control as well as Barbara. Isabel is not able to control her sexual desires for Levison or jealous passions and, therefore, is ruined. Elizabeth Rose Gruner contends that Barbara’s ability to control responses equates to an ability to control her sexual desires:

[u]nlike Isabel, she manages to sublimate sexual desires to the familial, repressing her passion for Archibald as she works with him on her brother’s case. What appears to be an illicit affair between them (an appearance that finally helps drive Isabel away) is not, yet Barbara is eventually ‘rewarded’ for her plotting by marriage to Archibald, after the report of Isabel’s death. Barbara’s plots succeed, then, because she is able

to keep her roles straight: as sister and daughter she works tirelessly for her brother and mother; as wife she puts her husband first; as mother she is a respectable and respected moral teacher. (316)

The elopement was partly encouraged by Isabel's own irrepressible desires. Barbara is able to control her sexual appetite, feelings, and societal roles. Desire for Carlyle is suppressed until she has rightfully earned a position as wife. By managing her various roles, Barbara displays emotional restraint and moderation; she gains status and love by commanding each domestic role.

After marrying Carlyle and, rising in status, Barbara continues to display a middle-class moral understanding of moderation by maintaining control of herself and her home. Barbara manages East Lynne with characteristic strength and composure. Whereas Cornelia reigned in domestic affairs during Lady Isabel's time at East Lynne, Barbara manages all aspects of the home. Even the care of the children is carefully regulated; Barbara does not believe her role as a mother should be immoderate. The nurse and governess are available to teach and discipline; whereas, the mother is to love and support. Barbara believes that mothers who constantly dote and lavish attention on their children ultimately fail their children. Thus, even immoderate attention for children can yield disaster.

Barbara's roles in East Lynne, as mother, wife, and housekeeper, are written in direct contrast with Isabel's former position. Barbara is clearly seen to usurp Isabel's roles and act more successfully in these capacities. Mangham suggests that: "*East Lynne* thus echoes mid-Victorian, conformist claims that the control of female emotion is crucial to the health and preservation of the middle-class way of life" (132). The Carlyle

home is more successful under Barbara's management, because she is able to master all physical and emotional tasks. At the end of the novel, Barbara is the heroine; her self-control is a sign of her overwhelming morality. Her position is stable and has never been questioned. It is doubtful that Barbara will ever fall as Isabel did, because she has the moderation to maintain her position. Barbara is able to succeed the immoral Isabel because she is able to continuously control all aspects of domestic life.

As the novel's most moral character, Archibald Carlyle displays reason and control throughout his investigation into Richard's innocence. Carlyle, known as a calm businessman, inherited the family business from his father and maintains the family's integrity with his caseload. The senior Carlyle would only choose cases in which he would represent respectable individuals. Carlyle states: "[m]y father held it right never to undertake business for a stranger: unless a man was good, and his cause was good, he did not entertain it; and I have acted on the same principle" (Wood 247). Carlyle continues the same demanding tradition and displays it early in the book. When two conflicting parties both request Carlyle's aid, he states that:

I will not act for either. . . I will have nothing to do with them. They are a bad lot, and it was in iniquitous piece of business their obtaining money in the first instance. When rogues fall out, honest men get their own. I decline it altogether: let them carry themselves to somebody else. (39)

This principle clearly displays Carlyle's moderation; he does not seek cases for notoriety or financial gain, but for what is right and always weighs all options carefully without letting emotion sway a decision. The calm manner carries over to his role in Richard Hare's case. Carlyle agrees to aid Richard not only as an old family friend, but because

he believes in the young man's innocence. For years, Carlyle maintains the secret of Richard's case, even to the detriment of his marriage with Lady Isabel. Secrecy is a sign of moderation; Carlyle clearly understands how to remain calm and maintain silence. Lady Isabel knows Carlyle has a secret, but misinterprets the truth, which leads to the dissolution of their marriage. Believing he has discovered the true Thorn, Carlyle does not jump to conclusions and arrest the man, but proceeds cautiously to ensure his actions are correct. Yet, when Thorn is discovered to be Levison and a trial is forthcoming, Carlyle refuses to represent Richard. His own calm logic leads him to this decision, believing it would be a conflict of interest as Levison eloped with Carlyle's wife and is contesting him for the representative spot. The eternally collected man admits to anger, but does not act upon the emotion; he states that: "have I been obliged to exercise violent control upon myself, or I should have horsewhipped him within an ace of his life" (501). Self-control such as this sets Archibald apart as a moral man.

Carlyle's moderate temper transcends work life and affects domestic life. Carlyle admires the young Lady Isabel Vane, but class differences prevent any marriage plans. However, after seeing the distress and abuse of the orphaned woman, he proposes; an event that turns out to be one of Carlyle's few spontaneous acts. Yet, even the unplanned proposal displays a calm manner; he spoke "earnest-hearted words of deep tenderness, calculated to win upon the mind's good sense. . ." (118). Though deeply loving Isabel and lavishing her with affection, Carlyle's dotting manner wanes as the years pass by. Simultaneously, when jealousy over Barbara Hare begins to grow, Carlyle dismisses the severity of Isabel's emotions. His calm demeanor does not allow for understanding the

depth of her feelings. For some time this continues and Carlyle remains unaware of her passionate state:

Mr. Carlyle, on his part, never gave a thought to the supposition that she might be jealous: he had believed that nonsense at an end years ago. He was perfectly honourable and true, giving her no shadow of cause or reason to be jealous of him: and being a practical, matter-of-fact man, it did not occur to him that she could be so. (258)

Though a practical and calm man, Carlyle's own restraint blinds him to the truth in the home. Brian W. McCuskey states that:

In fact, the good lawyer's professional reserve more than once disturbs the equilibrium of his personal affairs. . . . Carlyle manages to alienate his wife, to offend his sister by not telling her of his impending marriage, and to torment the smitten Barbara by not making clear his own strictly platonic feelings for her. As a man who has devoted his career to negotiating between the individual and public authority, Carlyle values his own privacy above all else, even to the point of jeopardizing his social and familial relationships. (372)

Victorian standards deemed this intense control to be an admirable trait, denoting traditional values. Hence, Carlyle's moderation in both his career and home represent his morality.

Carlyle's ability to control sentiment is astounding; even at the most poignant moments in his life, he remains stoically calm. When Lady Isabel flees, a servant watches Carlyle's reaction to the discovery: "Joyce sat on the edge of a chair--she could not stand-

-watching her master with a blanched face: never had she seen him betray agitation so powerful” (Wood 281). For Carlyle, powerful agitation is simply an involuntary discoloration. He never raises his voice or acts out; all actions and emotions are subdued. Additionally, Mrs. Hare relates to Isabel how Carlyle acted upon learning of his former wife’s death: “he made no outward sign, either of satisfaction or grief” (431). It is difficult to determine Carlyle’s views on matters, as he rarely displays emotion. By the end of the novel, West Lynne has elected Carlyle to represent the town in Parliament. Therefore, his peers respect and honor his cool temper. Such control and restraint reveal him to be a strong, moral character. The choices he makes, to remain calm, and to maintain secrets, allow the lawyer to rise in wealth and respectability. His constraint allows him to maintain moral character, despite the numerous surrounding scandals.

Though never losing self control, Carlyle realizes his self-possession may at times be too extreme and learns to relax during his marriage to Barbara. The proposal to Barbara is reminiscent of the engagement with Isabel in that both are representative of a straight-forward manner. When he asks for Barbara’s hand, “the words were spoken in the quietest, most matter-of-fact tone, just as if he had said, Shall I give you a chair, Barbara” (366). However, Carlyle continues in his proposal to ensure her of an intense love: “Do you know that I *love* you? That this is none other in the world whom I would care to marry, but you?” (367). After Isabel’s revelation and death, Carlyle understands that what drove her away was partly her ignorance of the true relationship with Barbara. Restraint had kept his wife from the truth and allowed jealousy to grow. Carlyle must decide whether secret keeping will continue with Barbara as well: “He was debating a question with himself, one he had thought over a good deal since Wednesday night.

Should he, or should he not, tell his wife” (622). Carlyle decides to loosen his restraint and confide in his wife. Deciding that it is best Barbara learn Madame Vine’s true identity, Carlyle states that: “I deemed it better to impart this to you, Barbara. My darling, I have told it you in love” (623). Therefore, Carlyle’s morality has always been exhibited through his restraint, but he understands that at times even a lack of restraint can still be the best choice.

Middle-class Victorian society detested indulgence and immoderate behavior. Though the novel contains numerous immoderate events, its morality is undeniable. An emotional outburst may seem a small crime in comparison to adultery or murder, but constant indulgence leads the way to such heavier crimes, as Lady Isabel and Levison exemplify. Mitchell includes “self-denial” and “self-control” as markers of middle-class respectability; these characteristics “promoted business efficiency and economic success” and were considered necessary for middle-class success (264). For example, Carlyle and Barbara ascend to higher-class positions due to their moderate tempers and actions. Their morality is never doubted because the pair continually conduct themselves in a composed manner. In direct contrast, Isabel and Levison fall from privileged positions because of emotional misconduct; their passionate, rash actions directly lead to immoral behaviors. Thus, moderation is directly linked to an individual’s morality. *East Lynne* does not champion just the middle class, but the moderate, moral middle class.

Conclusion

These three novels, *The Woman in White*, *Lady Audley's Secret*, and *East Lynne* were chosen for this thesis as they are among the most popular sensation novels. As representative novels of the genre, they clearly display the characteristics which earned the label as sensational: murder, adultery, hidden identities, and secrets. These same elements prompted contemporary critics to condemn the genre as immoral and inferior works; however, it was not just the presence of such immoral actions that concerned reviewers, but the possible effect such works could have on readers and their actions. As Deborah Wynne observes, "the popularity of the sensation novel suggested to some reviewers that the moral sanctity of the middle-class home itself was under attack" (5). Therefore, critics feared that high readership rates would indicate acceptance of the events in the novel; such acknowledgement and awareness of the the scandals in novels could incite similar immorality among avid readers. This would be a legitimate concern if the authors allowed the shocking actions to go unpunished; however, each immoral character in the novels must accept the consequences of his or her action and is clearly punished. Correspondingly, a character with traditional morals and righteous behavior is just as often rewarded. As the ill behavior is punished and positive behavior is rewarded, readers are in no way encouraged to commit similar deeds and, therefore, the critics' attacks of immorality and fears over the effect on the audience are unfounded.

Social migration is the primary means of reward and punishment in all three novels. This system allows moral characters to rise in social standing and reputation, while those who have committed immoral deeds are restricted to the lower levels of society. For example, in *The Woman in White* the immoral and illegitimate Sir Percival loses rank and his life as a direct result of his actions; whereas Walter Hartright ascends the social ladder as a reward for his continuous moral behavior. Similarly, in *Lady Audley's Secret*, the deceitful and attempted murderess Lady Audley is cast down from her elevated position once her horrendous acts are known. In *East Lynne*, Lady Isabel and Francis Levison fall to the lowest positions in society after their egregious misdeeds. The strict system for consequences suggests that while the readers enjoyed the thrill of scandal, they did not feel that such deeds should be allowed to go unpunished.

Despite the critical outrage, the novels enjoyed immense success and multiple printings. Therefore, the concerns over scandalous actions did not affect the average middle-class reader's acceptance. However, the stigma of inferiority and immorality among critics continues even now. William Cohen states: "while sensation novels typically turn on scandals, they tend to be concerned more with vividly representing the commission of scandalous acts than with commenting upon them and their reception" (20). Even a modern-day critic such as Cohen fails to see that Collins, Braddon, and Wood used a strict punishment system to continuously and forcefully comment on the scandals in their novels. Thus, the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of these novels continues today, and this work seeks to rectify this common, yet unfair stereotype. By recognizing the truth and motives behind these works, critics can begin to look beyond the scandal to discover the intricacy and depth of the novels.

WORKS CITED

- Bachman, Maria. "‘Furious Passions of the Celtic Race:’ Ireland, Madness and Wilkie Collins’s *Blind Love*." *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*. Ed. Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 179-194. Print.
- Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley’s Secret*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- Casey, Ellen Miller. "‘Highly Flavoured Dishes’ and ‘Highly Seasoned Garbage:’ Sensation in the *Anthenaeum*." *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre*. Eds. Kimberly Harrison and Richard Fantina. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006. 3-14. Print.
- Cohen, William A. *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction*. Eds. Michele Aina Barale, Jonathan Goldberg, Michael Moon, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Durham: Duke UP, 1996. Print.
- Collins, Wilkie. *The Woman in White*. Ed. George Stade. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. Print.
- Davidoff, Leonore and Catherine Hall. "Separate Spheres." *The Victorian Studies Reader*. Ed. Kelly Boyd and Rohan McWilliam. New York: Routledge, 2007. 307-317. Print.
- Fisk, Nicole. "Lady Audley as Sacrifice: Curing Female Disadvantage in *Lady Audley’s Secret*." *Victorian Newsletter* 105.1 (2004): 24-27. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 29 Nov. 2010.

- Gruner, Elisabeth Rose. "Plotting the Mother: Caroline Norton, Helen Huntingdon, and Isabel Vane." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* (1997): 303-325. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 12 Jan. 2011.
- Himmelfarb, Gertrude. "In Defense of the Victorians." *The Victorian Studies Reader*. Ed. Kelly Boyd and Rohan McWilliam. New York: Routledge, 2007. 209-219. Print.
- Hughes, Linda K. and Michael Lund. *The Victorian Serial*. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1991. Print.
- Ingham, Patricia. *The Language of Gender and Class: Transformation in the Victorian Novel*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- King, Andrew and John Plunkett, eds. *Victorian Print Media: A Reader*. New York: Oxford, 2005. Print.
- Klein, Herbert G. "Strong Women and Feeble Men: Upsetting Gender Stereotypes in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*." *Atenea* 28.1 (2008): 161-174. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 29 Nov. 2010.
- Langland, Elizabeth. *Telling Tales: Gender and Narrative Form in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Columbus: Ohio State U., 2002. Print.
- Law, Graham. *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*. New York: Palgrave, 2000. Print.
- Liddle, Dallas. "Anatomy of a 'Nine Days' Wonder: Sensational Journalism in the Decade of the Sensation Novel." *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*. Eds. Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 89-104. Print.
- Mangham, Andrew. *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine, and Victorian Popular Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

- Maunder, Andrew. "'Stepchildren of Nature': *East Lynne* and the Spectre of Female Degeneracy, 1860-1861." *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*. Ed. Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004. Print.
- McCuskey, Brian W. "The Kitchen Police: Servant Surveillance and Middle-Class Transgression." *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2000): 359-375. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 12 Jan. 2011.
- Mitchell, Sally. *Daily Life in Victorian England*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996. Print.
- Montwieler, Katherine. "Marketing Sensation: *Lady Audley's Secret* and Consumer Culture." *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context*. Ed. Marlene Tromp, Pamela K. Gilbert, and Aeron Haynie. Albany: State U of New York P, 2000. 43-61. Print.
- Nayder, Lillian. "Rebellious Sepoys and Bigamous Wives." *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context*. Ed. Marlene Tromp, Pamela K. Gilbert, and Aeron Haynie. Albany: State U of New York P, 2000. 31-42. Print.
- "Our Female Sensation Novelists." *The Living Age* 22 (Aug. 1863): 352-269. *Google Books*. Web. 23 October 2010.
- Page, Norman, ed. *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1974. Print.
- Pallo, Vicki. "From Do-Nothing to Detective: The Transformation of Robert Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret*." *Journal of Popular Culture* 39.3 (2006): 466-78. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 29 Nov. 2010.

- Palmer, Beth. “‘Dangerous and Foolish Work’: Evangelicalism and Sensationalism in Ellen Wood’s *Argosy Magazine*.” *Women’s Writing* 15.2 (2008): 187-198. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 12 Jan. 2011.
- Rev. of *The Woman in White*, by Wilkie Collins. *Dublin University Magazine* (February 1861). *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1974. Ed. Norman Page. 103-5.
- Rev. of *The Woman in White*, by Wilkie Collins. *Saturday Review* (25 August 1860). *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1974. Ed. Norman Page. 87-9.
- Rev. of *The Woman in White*, by Wilkie Collins. *Westminster Review* (October 1866). *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1974. Ed. Norman Page. 157-8.
- Rev. of *The Woman in White*, by Wilkie Collins. *Critic* (25 August 1860). *Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1974. Ed. Norman Page. 85.
- Steere, Elizabeth Lee. “‘I Thought You Was an Evil Spirit’: The Hidden Villain of *Lady Audley’s Secret*.” *Women’s Writing* 15.3 (2008): 300-319. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 29 Nov. 2010.
- Taylor, Jenny Bourne. *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, & Nineteenth-century Psychology*. New York: Routledge, 1988. Print.
- Thoms, Peter. *The Windings of the Labyrinth: Quest and Structure in the Major Novels of Wilkie Collins*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1992. Print.

Tromp, Marlene, Pamela K. Gilbert, and Aeron Haynie, eds. *Beyond Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon in Context*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2000. 43-61.

Print.

Wood, Ellen. *East Lynne*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Wynne, Deborah. *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Print.

VITA

Bethany Nicole Maxwell was born in Pryor, Oklahoma, on May 1, 1985, the daughter of Brian Andrew Mason and Alice Raenette Mason. After graduating in the top ten percent of her class from Pigeon Forge High School, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, in 2003, she entered East Tennessee State University located in Johnson City, Tennessee. She studied English Education and graduated Summa Cum Laude with the degree of Bachelor of Art in 2007. In August 2009, she entered the Graduate College of Texas State University-San Marcos. During her studies she also taught English for middle and high school students in Austin, Texas.

Permanent Address: M.bethany85@gmail.com

This thesis was typed by Bethany Maxwell